

# Dallas Business Journal

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### High hopes and the High Five

Progress of giant construction project may mirror Telecom Corridor turnaround

Just in case you hadn't heard, the Dallas High Five construction project is a full 10 months ahead of schedule. Only another year and a half to go. (If only we could say the same thing about the Dallas Cowboys.) After three years of construction, those of us right in the middle of what could be the biggest construction mess in the Metroplex are ready for it all to be done.

Here at M/C/C, which is located on the second floor of the Crosspoint Atrium building on the northwest corner of the High Five at Central Expressway and Interstate 635, we've been watching the whole thing. We've always felt that, once it's done, the giant interchange will be the unofficial gateway to the Telecom Corridor. In addition, we've also noticed something rather mysterious — the progress of the construction seems to mirror the health of the businesses in the Telecom Corridor.

Right about the time construction first began on the High Five, the telecom industry was starting to really suffer. The High Five's various lane closures and all of that initial demolition seemed all too similar to the business closings and demolition of jobs happening just a few miles up the road in the heart of the Telecom Corridor. Over the course of the last three years, we've seen traffic in the High Five slow to a trickle on a pretty regular basis — just like business slowed to a trickle for many companies in the Corridor.

But it's not all bad news all the time. Some of



#### FRONT LINES

Mike Crawford

the new lanes on the High Five are now open, and there are a few new businesses that have opened in the Corridor. Traffic flow will improve soon, and health is beginning to return to the region — albeit slowly. By the time the High Five is finished, the Telecom Corridor could be well on its way to



DALLAS HIGH FIVE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

regaining a large portion of its strength.

During this entire time, M/C/C has been positioned uniquely to observe both phenomena. While some are still skeptical, as a hi-tech PR and advertising agency, we consider our-

selves a true barometer of North Texas technology health. We've had a front-row seat as some of our clients and their neighbors have suffered during the downturn.

However, just as the High Five is beginning to near completion, so, too, the Telecom Corridor is seeing some signs of stability and slow growth. This year, one of our clients in the Corridor, Covaro Networks, received a significant round of funding at a time when VC firms were still a bit skittish about investing in technology. Also, our clients Systemax Solutions and Accudata Technologies received success and growth awards at this past year's Tech Titans event. That has got to be worth an exit or two, right?

Over the past three years, we've seen the High Five go up outside of our office windows, blocking what used to be a pretty nice southern view and giving our employees driving fits when it came to the opening and closing of lanes. As we've added new clients, we've had to interview and hire new employees. Of course, we had to be a little lenient on some of those interviewees if they got here a minute or two late. Getting to our offices hasn't always been easy for our clients and prospects during the construction. Yet, even with all of the hassles, we know it will eventually provide easier access to our business and to many of the other businesses located in the Corridor.

So, the High Five isn't done yet, but it is getting there and, though it is a bit of a strange coincidence, the health of the businesses in the Telecom Corridor continues to improve right along with it. As you sit in traffic at Central and Interstate 635 during the next year and a half, hopefully the thought of all that progress will help make the waiting a little more bearable.

CRAWFORD is the president and founder of Dallas-based M/C/C, a marketing communications agency serving the technology industry.